

**“Transformed Communities”**  
Message by DD Adams  
FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST  
Peace With Justice Sunday / Trinity Sunday  
Kemptown Providence UM Church  
May 27, 2018

The epistle lesson is from Romans, chapter 8, verses 12 through 17. So then, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation, but it isn't an obligation to ourselves to live our lives on the basis of selfishness. If you live on the basis of selfishness, you are going to die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the actions of the body, you will live. All who are led by God's Spirit are God's sons and daughters. You didn't receive a spirit of slavery to lead you back again into fear, but you received a Spirit that shows you are adopted as his children.

With this Spirit, we cry, “Abba, Father.” The same Spirit agrees with our spirit, that we are God's children. But if we are children, we are also heirs. We are God's heirs and fellow heirs with Christ, if we really suffer with him so that we can also be glorified with him.

The New Testament lesson is from John's gospel, chapter 3, verses 1 through 17. There was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a Jewish leader. He came to Jesus at night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one could do these miraculous signs that you do unless God is with him.”

Jesus answered, “I assure you, unless someone is born anew, it’s not possible to see God’s kingdom.” Nicodemus asked, “How is it possible for an adult to be born? It’s impossible to enter the mother’s womb for a second time and be born, isn’t it?” Jesus answered, “I assure you, unless someone is born of water and the Spirit, it’s not possible to enter God’s kingdom. Whatever is born of the flesh is flesh, and whatever is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Don’t be surprised that I said to you, ‘You must be born anew.’ God’s Spirit blows wherever it wishes. You hear its sound, but you don’t know where it comes from or where it is going. It’s the same with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” Nicodemus said, “How are these things possible?”

“Jesus answered, “You are a teacher of Israel and you don’t know these things? I assure you that we speak about what we know and testify about what we have seen, but you don’t receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you don’t believe, how will you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has gone up to heaven except the one who came down from heaven, the Human One.

Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so must the Human One be lifted up so that everyone who believes in him will have eternal life. God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him

won't perish but will have eternal life. God didn't send his Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through him. This is God's word for God's people. God we pray your blessing on the hearing, reading, and understanding of your word today. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

Peace be with you! Today we recognize Peace with Justice Sunday and how that works together with the Trinity—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The Trinity is that perfect community of peace and justice; it's a family that works together in harmony. And that harmony is peace, and that brings about justice when we come together to work for it.

The texts read we read focus on transformation. When we interact with God to be transformed individually, our community will be transformed as well. Michael Jackson said it this way, "If you want to make the world a better place, take a look at yourself and make a change." We know we can't change without Christ—we need his power to be shaped into the image of God!

Listen again to Romans 8, verses 12-13. "So then, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation, but it isn't an obligation to ourselves to live our lives on the basis of selfishness. If you live on the basis of selfishness, you are going to die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the actions of the body, you will live." When we accept Christ into our hearts our motives and intentions change. We begin to focus

on God's ways not so much our self. We work with each other in ministry and strive to express all that we do in order to advance God's kingdom.

We're community focused, just as the Trinity's life is based on community. We're led by the Spirit of God as children of God, and this leads the community to be transformed. Being baptized into Christ by water and the Spirit is the starting point. In baptism we renounce our past selfishness and sinful ways, and the result is that we walk in newness of life. Our goal is to model the Trinity's relationship so that all we do expresses love, peace, and justice.

In the gospel lesson, John 3 speaks of personal transformation. Nicodemus was a leader of the Jews—a Pharisee. Nicodemus knows Jesus is from God or he couldn't do the miracles he does. He's seeking God and asks Jesus how to be born anew or how to be born from above.

Nicodemus is caught up in his past way of thinking. He asks Jesus, how can I possibly be born a second time! I'm an adult! Nicodemus is questioning his faith in God. He's growing spiritually through asking questions and seeking. What's great about Nicodemus is that he doesn't stay at this personal/private transformational place in his life. Later in the gospel, we'll see Nicodemus reach out into the community.

For example, in John 7 Nicodemus takes Jesus' side to defend him to the Jewish authorities who are opposed to Jesus. And later, we see Nicodemus going

with myrrh and aloes to Jesus' burial. Nicodemus is working with God and being transformed as he's doing it! Our aim as followers of Christ is to be transformed. It begins with baptism, but it moves and progresses from that point on; it doesn't stop. Baptism isn't that one-time experience. It's ongoing and progressive.

Psalm 29, verse 11 tells us the need we have for God's strength in order to do these things with God in our lives; this should be our prayer. Listen to verse 11. "Let the Lord give strength to [God's own] people! Let the Lord bless [God's own] people with peace!" Let's receive God's strength to become givers of peace so we might show God's love, peace, and live out justice.

Please pray with me. God, as soldiers go off to defend and protect our nation we pray for peace. In our prayers for peace, let us nurture a mutual bond with them and with God. What Christ did for us wasn't free, and what our soldiers have done in the giving of their lives isn't free either. They've given the most valuable thing they have to give—their very lives.

Challenge us Lord to continue to be transformed not just individually, but also to work within our community in the body of Christ to worship and pray together. Encourage us God to reimagine a world without violence, hatred, greed, and oppression and to pray for your love, peace and justice to reign. Help us to become that model of love and peace. Amen.

